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ABSTRACT

The document presents a discussion of continuing education in Pennsylvania in relation to the state of the art nationwide. At the national level, adult education participants (15,734,000) was double the number of college students during 1971-72. Continuing education is defined for Pennsylvania as "a course/activity which is considered to be outside the regular administrative structure and schedule." The 102 institutions reporting offerings in adult/continuing education courses involve: (1) 11,428 full-or part-time faculty in 1,008 locations, (2) 10,709 distinct offerings with 18,391 sections, and (3) 447,214 total resignations. Problems in the implementation of continuing education are listed, and recommendations for the establishment of a task force for the purpose of studying the issues are presented. (Author/EC)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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SUBJECT: Continuing Education -- Lifelong Learning

TO Members of the Council
of Higher Education

FROM Jerome M. Ziegler
Commissioner of Higher Education

JMZ

The State Board of Education in approving a Master Plan for Higher Education, 1971, recognized the importance and potential of continuing education as a needed service for Commonwealth residents. From time to time the Council has expressed concerns about the plethora of activities by a growing number of institutions. Considerable time is spent by staff of the Office of Higher Education mediating "territorial" disputes among the segments and institutions of higher education.

The attached paper describes the background of continuing education, state of the art, problems and issues attending thereto and suggests a number of recommendations. Since life long learning is the most rapidly developing concept in higher education, I would recommend that the 1202 Commission establish a Task Force to thoroughly study the issues and make recommendations on leadership and policy to the State Board of Education.

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BACKGROUND

1. The Master Plan of 1971 devoted an entire chapter to continuing education.[1] That the framers of the Plan saw this issue as a significant one is seen from the fact that the document's structure places continuing education on a level with Coordination and Accountability, Commitment, and Equalization of Higher Education Opportunity.

2. Indeed, the rationale presented for continuing education in that Plan has proved especially prophetic.

> *The rate of development of man's knowledge and technology... requires continued learning on the part of most adults if their knowledge or skills are not to become obsolete.*[2]

The obsolescence of knowledge or skills is a problem which can hardly be overestimated. The past costs of obtaining an education now become obsolete, the future costs of retooling to meet new and changing needs, and the enormous cost in terms of human anxiety and despondency as mature adults are dismissed from positions for which changing socio-economic conditions have rendered them unfit--all these are costs which no society can bear. Obsolescence has become a major issue in higher education, and will continue to be so until the problem is solved.

3. We can, however, attempt to look at parts of the problem. Again, the Master Plan suggests three separate kinds of continuing education activities.

a. *Credit programs for full- or part-time students.*

b. *Non-credit programs of a wide variety, designed to meet individual needs.*

c. *Community service programs designed to meet current social and economic needs.*[3]

How extensive is continuing education at the moment? Between 1968 and 1973, for example, more people were enrolled in continuing education than in traditional education. Although a revised definition of continuing education has decreased that proportion, those enrolled for degree credit in 1973-74 comprised 37 percent of total college enrollment.[4] Historically, then, continuing education in Pennsylvania (and nationally) has involved more people than have all traditional undergraduate, graduate and professional programs combined.

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[1]Chapter V, 1971 Master Plan for Higher Education in Pennsylvania, May 14, 1971, pp. 25-26.

[2]Ibid., p. 25.

[3]Ibid.

[4]See page 3.

The role of our own institutions has been significant.

The Pennsylvania State University has been providing continuing education since 1886. In 1934 the trustees indicated their perception of the importance of this activity by creating an Office of the Assistant to the President with responsibility for the coordination of extension activities.

In 1963, state legislation created the community college system and provided for state and local sponsor support of adult education programs.

The state college segment has been recently devoting more of its energies to continuing education, though the history and extent of such involvement varies among institutions.

The independent colleges and universities, as might be expected, have varied widely in their continuing education activities, the variety probably being due as much to differences in institutional priorities as to campus location. (This latter factor, location, would seem to be closely related to public response, as suggested by the effect on enrollment of Penn State's widely scattered continuing education centers.)

STATE OF THE ART

1. National Perspective

Initial efforts to obtain continuing education data started in 1968. In 1971-72 there were 15,734,000 individual adult education participants, nearly double the number of college students enrolled for degree credit and 600,000 more than the number of high school students in grades 9-12.

Participants in adult education are nearly evenly divided between the sexes. There is, however, considerable difference between the sexes in the growth of interest in adult education. In the three-year period from 1969 to 1972 there was a 28 percent increase in the number of women participants and only one-half as much, 14 percent, in the number of male participants. Of the 7,700,000 male participants in adult education, 19 percent were Vietnam war veterans. The veterans appear to prefer part-time adult education. Of the 6½ million male full-time students only 9.1 percent were Vietnam veterans.

The age distribution of participants is quite different from that of the college and university students. More than 45 percent are over age 34, and 15 percent are over age 44.

2. Definition

Most higher education planners and researchers agree that the area of adult/continuing education is one of the most difficult to define. This stems from the fact that adult/continuing education is available in a number of different types of activities (courses, conferences, workshops, lectures, and institutes). These may be offered for standard college credit, or for no credit, at a number of locations (main or branch campuses, extension centers, and industrial facilities).

The United States Office of Education's definition of adult/continuing education, used in a 1970-71 nationwide survey and in a 1971-72 Pennsylvania survey, was:

> *Activities designed to meet the needs of people beyond compulsory school age whose major occupation is not that of a full-time student. They enroll for a variety of reasons (civic, cultural, professional, occupational, social, etc.) in educational activities normally administered through channels other than those designed for part-time or full-time regular "day" degree program students. However, the work they take may be creditable toward a degree, although such students may not be taking work through the regular degree channels.*

The 1973-74 survey in Pennsylvania used a shortened definition:

> *Continuing education is a course/activity which is considered to be outside the regular administrative structure and schedule.*

The major change here is that students taking regular courses at night would not automatically be counted with continuing education registrations. Since that time, many proposed revisions in this definition have been discussed at the national level.

3. Findings--Pennsylvania[5]

The 102 institutions reporting offerings in adult/continuing education indicated a total of 11,428 faculty were involved; another 2,915 (including duplication) were involved during the summer. Six out of ten faculty members employed during the regular academic year were working on a part-time basis solely in adult/continuing education. Another 25 percent were involved as part of an overload or additional assignment, while 13.3 percent were participating as part of their regular assignment. Very few faculty members (1.5 percent) were employed full-time to work strictly in these activities.

According to the data reported, 65 institutions offered at least one activity away from the main campus (or branch campus where reported). In all, 1,008 locations with adult/continuing education were reported throughout the Commonwealth, with the state-related Commonwealth universities and community colleges showing the largest number of off-campus activities.

The 102 Pennsylvania institutions reported a total of 10,709 distinct offerings which encompassed 18,391 sections. Nearly 45 percent of all offerings were in credit courses, with another 33 percent in noncredit courses. The remaining offerings were divided between credit and noncredit conferences, institutes and/or workshops (1.8 and 20.6 percent, respectively).

Of the 447,214 total registrations reported, 169,595 or 37.9 percent were in credit activities, while 277,619 or 62.1 percent were in noncredit activities.

The activities with the largest portion of the total registrations were noncredit conferences, institutes and/or workshops, which accounted for 38 percent of all registrations. Following, in order of impact, were credit courses, 37.1 percent; noncredit courses, 24.1 percent; credit conferences, institutes and/or workshops, 0.8 percent. Nearly six out of ten credit course registrations were at the undergraduate level, with another 32.8 percent being offered as an undergraduate and graduate level offering, depending on the status of the individual.

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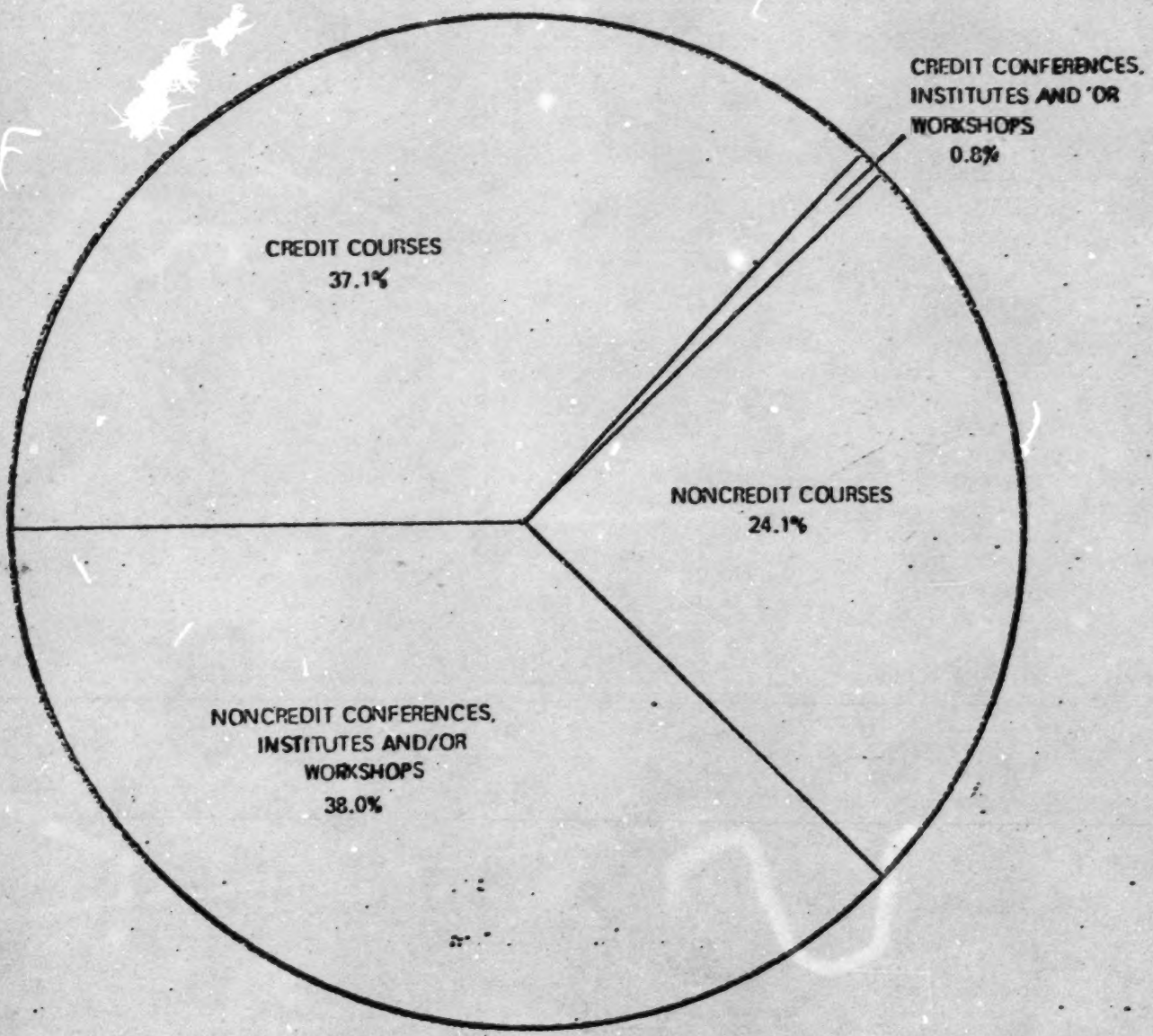
[5]Our Colleges and Universities Today, vol. XII (1973-74), pp. 2-3.

TOTAL REGISTRATION:

Continuing Education vs Traditional
College Enrollment

Year	College Enrollment Head Count	Total Registration Continuing Education	Degree Credit Continuing Education
1968-69	370,021	500,[illegible]2	296,058
1969-70	391,876	401,796	216,375
1970-71	411,053	525,970	249,396
1971-72	432,536	551,096	303,685
1972-73	437,920	No Report (New Definition Pending)	
1973-74	448,629	447,214[6]	166,022

[6]Continuing education figures for 1973-74 make use of the revised definition.


CREDIT CONFERENCES, INSTITUTES AND/OR WORKSHOPS 0.8%
CREDIT COURSES 37.1%
NONCREDIT COURSES 24.1%
NONCREDIT CONFERENCES, INSTITUTES AND/OR WORKSHOPS 38.0%

TOTAL REGISTRATIONS IN ADULT/CONTINUING EDUCATION ACTIVITIES
BY TYPE OF ACTIVITY, 1973-74

8

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

1. Scope

The importance of continuing education to the individual adult citizen and to government, business, industry and other institutions and agencies cannot be overstated in terms of present numbers involved and predictions of the expanding needs of a technological society.

All segments of higher education are involved in varying degrees with continuing education programs. In addition, certain industrial firms are providing in-plant service while many school districts sponsor adult evening programs.

2. Financing

Because the value of continuing education activities has never been adequately studied, the potential for a cost/benefit ratio through expanded central planning and government funding remains to be examined.

3. Reactions from the Field

- Department leadership is split among several bureaus as well as between Higher and Basic Education.
- State colleges need additional funds and staff positions in order to provide a more effective service.
- State colleges are at a disadvantage because their faculty contracts provide overtime pay for conducting such programs. Thus, the minimum size class must be larger.
- Although the community colleges have lower student cost than other segments, especially the private segment, the cost to the state may be higher.
- Many will later be diverted into positions not requiring the skills of their discipline, but new skills.
- Some will track into highly specialized positions in their discipline.
- Continuing education students pay a higher cost for credits because the programs are not subsidized as are full-time programs.

- In many instances credits earned in continuing education programs are not transferable toward a degree.

- Since some professional and semi-professional programs produce people with skills that become obsolete, and since such programs are often long and costly, the possibility should be studied for shortening these programs while, at the same time, building in a continuing education component.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The 1202 Commission should create a task force to study the issues and problems contained in this report and then report to the State Board of Education on its findings.

2. Membership on that task force should be composed of continuing education specialists, lay persons, and members of those agencies with an interest in the problems. The background of the members should be strong in the delivery of services, in knowledge of cost effectiveness, and awareness of community reaction to continuing education programs.

3. The general approach of the task force should be to identify distinct problems and then to seek appropriate categoric solutions. The following specific areas should be considered.

   a. *The short- and long-range impact of each problem on society, and the extent to which a solution will speak to the needs of society;*

   b. *The nature and extent of state leadership needed to solve these problems;*

   c. *The potential for duplication and competition between institutions in delivering the programs seen as solving these problems;*

   d. *The possibility of segmental missions in the delivery of such programs and services;*

   e. *The impact of lifelong learning, external degree programs, and open college kinds of arrangements on continuing education in the Commonwealth.*

   f. *The financial needs and support system for providing lifelong learning programs for all residents of the Commonwealth.*